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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001149

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: UIGHUR DOCUMENTARY AT CENTER OF LATEST
CROSS-STRAIT DUST-UP

Classified By: AIT Director Bill Stanton. Reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: At the urging of the city government, a Kaohsiung film festival rescheduled the screening of a documentary about Uighur activist Rebiya Kadeer in hopes of lessening possible PRC repercussions on the local economy. Several mainland tourist groups have cancelled visits to Kaohsiung for a variety of reasons, and the city's hospitality industry fears the scheduled screening of the movie could lead to further declines. Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu,s decision to screen the film before the start of the festival, instead of cancelling it altogether, was seen as playing to her political base of voters who would see cancellation as kowtowing to Beijing. End Summary.

Had We Known...

¶2. (C) The non-partisan Kaohsiung Film Archives, organizers of the October 10-29 Kaohsiung Film Festival, told AIT/Kaohsiung it had not foreseen opposition from Beijing over the decision to screen "The 10 Conditions of Love," a documentary about Uighur activist Rebiya Kadeer. The organizers defended the film's selection as an act of free speech and artistic expression. Nonetheless, at the request of the Kaohsiung City government, the screening was moved forward to nearly three weeks before the festival's opening in an attempt to put the controversy to rest early. An initial special screening for invited guests was held September 22, with more screenings through the following day. There were no immediate reports of protests.

Tit For Tat?

¶3. (C) Even before the controversy over the Kadeer film, Mayor Chen had earned Beijing's ire by inviting the Dalai Lama to Taiwan to console victims of Typhoon Morakot. Kaohsiung,s tourism sector subsequently complained to the city government about several Chinese tour group cancellations. The Kaohsiung Tourism Bureau Director told AIT/K about 5,000 hotel room reservations in Kaohsiung had been cancelled in September, and he speculated Typhoon Morakot, the Dalai Lama visit, H1N1 flu and the Kadeer film all were factors.

¶4. (C) Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Economic Director Lee Li-jane told AIT on September 21 that China had made no formal protest over the Dalai Lama's visit. Lee said MAC had learned, however, that Chinese officials recently had advised travel agents to delay organizing trips to Kaohsiung City and County without specifying why. The visitor slowdown, Lee said, was due in part to typhoon damage to favorite tourist attractions. He noted that China had indicated tours to Taiwan could be increased after expected road repairs in those tourist areas were completed in early October.

Political Motive?

15. (SBU) Accurate or not, the vision of China using its growing economic importance to Taiwan to influence the island's political and social life plays into the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) message that President Ma's efforts to improve cross-Strait ties will only make Taiwan more vulnerable to PRC coercion. Certainly, some saw Kaohsiung Mayor Chen's decision to move up the screening of the film, instead of cancelling it outright, as a move to balance the demands of the tourism industry with a political base within the DPP that is wary of China's designs on Taiwan. In a September 21 island-wide poll conducted by Apple Daily, 57% of respondents supported the decision to screen the Kadeer film, while 34% were concerned about the effect of the screening on local tourism. Support for Mayor Chen's decision may have been even higher in Kaohsiung, which is a DPP stronghold. Meanwhile, editorials in the mass circulation Apple Daily, pro-DPP Liberty Times and other media outlets lambasted China for its "interference in Taiwan's domestic affairs" and encouraged the people of Taiwan to stand resolute in support of the film as a symbol of democracy and freedom of expression. Also, the directors of two films about political prisoners during Taiwan's martial law era withdrew their films from the festival to protest Mayor Chen's decision to cancel the documentary's official screening.

16. (SBU) While Koumintang (KMT) politicians in Kaohsiung have not publicly linked the decline in mainland tourism to Mayor

TAIPEI 00001149 002 OF 002

Chen's decision to invite the Dalai Lama, followed by the film festival controversy, a small number of KMT legislators in Taipei have done so. Premier Wu Den-yih indicated he respected the Kaohsiung government's decision to screen the film and would not involve the Executive Yuan in the matter.
STANTON